



PRESS RELEASE

House Armed Services Committee

Floyd D. Spence, Chairman

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CONTACT: Maureen Cragin

Ryan Vaart

(202) 225-2539

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN FLOYD SPENCE

OPEN HEARING ON CHINA'S STRATEGIC INTENTIONS AND GOALS

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Today, the full committee meets for the first of several hearings intended to review China's foreign policy, security strategy, military capabilities, and view of the United States. This morning's hearing will explore China's strategic intentions and goals.

Today, the United States has roughly 100,000 military personnel deployed in the Asia-Pacific region defending America's interests. These interests – which are political, economic, and military – appear to be increasingly challenged by China, which is posturing to become the dominant power in Asia. The divergent security interests between the United States and China, especially as they relate to Taiwan, have led to increased concern that our two nations may be on a path that leads to more serious confrontation in the future.

Despite the evolution of our relationship with China over the past several decades, I am concerned that China's goals and policies may not be as benign as some might hope. Certainly, a significant body of Chinese writings and statements give me pause about China's true intentions and its view of the United States. Unfortunately, I believe a misunderstanding of China's strategic objectives has been compounded by a failure to effectively communicate American interests in the Asia-Pacific region and American intentions to defend those interests. The result has been a more assertive Chinese foreign policy, an increased risk of Chinese miscalculation, the undermining of the strategic partnership that the United States and China once enjoyed, and an increase in the risk of military confrontation.

Ironically, it seems that U.S. relations with China were better during the Cold War than they are today. China actually helped the West wage the Cold War against the Soviet Union, supporting freedom fighters in Afghanistan and tying down dozens of Soviet divisions on its frontier, divisions that otherwise would have threatened Western Europe. These actions by China were not altruistic, to be sure, but coincided with Beijing's strategic interests—that is what a real "strategic partnership" is all about.

Now, it appears that this strategic partnership with China is over.

In recent years, China has threatened the United States over our support for Taiwan – including raising the possibility of nuclear war. China is also pursuing a significant strategic forces modernization program, and is greatly

increasing the quality of its conventional forces for the explicit, officially-stated purpose, of challenging the United States in the China Seas – waters that are crucial to the U.S. for sustaining its relations with Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan.

China is also recognized by the intelligence community as one of the most serious proliferators of weapons of mass destruction technology in the world today. Moreover, China is strengthening its political and military ties with Russia in ways that seek to isolate the United States diplomatically and limit U.S. influence in the region. These do not appear to be the actions of a “strategic partner.”

In light of these actions, I am perhaps most troubled by the Administration’s policy with respect to Taiwan. The Administration’s obvious reluctance to arm Taiwan – a democratic friend of the United States – sends a dangerous message to Beijing. Similarly, the Administration’s failure to sanction China for its proliferation practices and its failure to discourage China from pursuing stronger security ties with Russia represent further examples of dangerous miscommunication.

In sum, I am concerned that China’s intentions toward the United States may be more threatening than is widely accepted. If so, current Administration policy may be reinforcing China’s behavior and setting the United States and China on a collision course.

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